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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF S/E NATSIOS, AND AF/SPG
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
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SUBJECT: LOOKING TOWARD U.S. TRIP, MINAWI OUTLINES SLM'S PRIORITIES

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Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (S/NF) The SLM has two priorities, according to chairman Minni Minawi: 1) Supporting its fighters in Darfur to maintain their loyalty and 2) Stabilizing the political party. Minawi hopes to focus on addressing the grievances of the SLM's military wing during a trip to Washington and return to Sudan with a tangible expression of support. He will also seek financial backing from Libya. While outlining his vision of cooperation with the SPLM to prepare for the 2009 elections, Minawi is frank about the implosion of the SLM's political wing. However, he does not have a long-term plan for addressing these internal political challenges. A lack of resources is the primary catalyst for the movement's decline, but the SLM also lacks sound political analysis and strategy. We continue to press the SPLM and the SLM to coordinate, but our expectations must be tempered by the lessons of history as the SPLM has not demonstrated a sustained interest in cooperation with its much weaker partner. Please see action request para. 9. End summary.

Two Priorities: Fighters, Party Stabilization

¶2. (C) The Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) has two priorities, SLM Chairman and Senior Assistant to the President Minni Minawi told Poloff on December 11: 1) Support its fighters in Darfur to maintain their loyalty and 2) Stabilizing the political party. As tensions within the SLM undermine Minawi's leadership and split the movement, Minawi intimated that both issues were intertwined. Without greater financial resources, SLM military units will continue to defect, the SLM will be unable to provide benefits to its constituents, and internal cohesion will deteriorate--making it impossible for Minawi to build a credible political party that can participate in the national debate.

High Expectations for Washington Trip

¶3. (S/NF) Minawi said that AF A/S Frazer had invited him to Washington in early 2008 during a December 6 phone call. Ecstatic about the trip, he proposed bringing 15 SLM members on his delegation, including chief commander Jumaa Hagar and several field commanders. Minawi said that it is important that he return to Sudan with a tangible example of U.S. support for the SLM--particularly for the armed wing, which, lacking basic food and medical care, is increasingly restless. Minawi claimed that First Vice President Salva Kiir had told him that, during his November meeting with President Bush, the President had suggested that the U.S. will consider financing the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) to provide food to the SLM, as it had done in the spring of 2007 (Note: we have no independent confirmation of this claim).

...and for Tripoli

¶4. (C) The SLM will also seek financial aid from Libya, according to Minawi. In a recent phone conversation with Libyan intelligence czar Abdullah Sanousi, who Minawi characterized as the "friend of all armed groups," Sanousi was receptive to Minawi's request to visit Libya after the Eid Al Adha holiday. Minawi acknowledged that, during a November trip to Khartoum, African Affairs Secretary Ali Treiki had rejected the SLM position on the UN/AU peace process and had supported the Arab League donor process for Darfur that circumvents the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority (TGRA). However, Minawi contended that Treiki and Sanousi were from different "wings" of the Libyan Government and remained optimistic that he could obtain some support from Tripoli through Sanousi's intervention. He requested further information from Washington on the timing of his U.S. trip so that he could schedule the Libya visit.

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A Vision for 2009...

¶5. (C) While concerned about the state of the SLM's military wing, Minawi articulated his vision of cooperation with the SPLM to prepare for the 2009 elections. Darfur is "too confused between the groups" to discuss elections there, said Minawi, but he asserted that the SLM remains popular among Darfurians in other parts of Sudan, particularly Gezira, Gedaref, and Blue Nile. "Eighty-five percent of Blue Nile is with the SLM or the SPLM," he explained. In a recent meeting, Minawi had urged Kiir and the SPLM to end discussion of Southern secession and instead work with the SLM "to kick out the NCP" from Khartoum. Minawi also suggested that the SLM could cooperate with the Eastern Front, another region where he!cl!imed the SLM ir popwlar among rmsIde~v Darbuziaj3>-Q/-, -m-, ---=%, -Q6.Ne(QQAYkP|oa3J)-)-.-'=, Q? %-, Qj & 'hC(OizGkc#rQ1kskQew2 \eM%%Q(0tsq